



# ADDITIONAL COVID-19 MBS MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

The Australian Government will provide 10 additional Medicare subsidised psychological therapy sessions for people who have used their 10 initial sessions and are in areas subject to restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mental health and suicide prevention remains one of the Australian Government's highest priorities. The Government recognises the mental health impact the COVID-19 pandemic is having on individuals and communities, particularly those in areas where additional public health orders have been issued to stop the spread of the virus.

Since January, the Government has provided approximately \$500 million in additional funding for mental health services and suicide prevention, including \$64 million for suicide prevention, \$74 million for preventative mental health services, and \$48 million to support the pandemic response plan.

On 2 August 2020, the Government announced its commitment to provide additional mental health support to people impacted by the pandemic. This will ensure eligible Australians can continue to access essential mental health treatment and support at this difficult time.

## Access to an additional 10 Medicare subsidised psychological therapy services

From 7 August 2020 until 31 March 2021, an additional 10 individual psychological therapy sessions are available to eligible people under the existing *Better Access to Psychiatrists, Psychologists and General Practitioners through the MBS* (Better Access) initiative.

The additional Medicare subsidised sessions will allow eligible people to continue to receive mental health care from their psychologist, GP or other eligible allied health worker.

Eligible people who have used up their existing 10 individual sessions in a calendar year will be able to access an additional 10 sessions under their existing Mental Health Treatment Plan.

To access these services, you must be:

- in an area with public health orders restricting your movements within a state or territory issued at any time from 1 July 2020 to 31 March 2021; or
- required to isolate or quarantine under public health orders for at least 14 days.

State and territory public health areas are listed on the [Department of Health's website](#) and will be updated regularly based on the evolving pandemic.

If you are eligible, you will need to see your GP, psychiatrist or paediatrician for a review and referral to access the additional 10 sessions (sessions 11- 20). Your medical practitioner will determine whether you will benefit from additional support.

You are able to access the additional 10 sessions once only between the period 7 August 2020 until 31 March 2021.

Allied mental health services which can be provided under Better Access include:

- Psychological Therapy services provided by eligible clinical psychologists
- Focussed Psychological Strategies services provided by eligible GPs, registered psychologists, eligible social workers and occupational therapists.

For more information on the new Better Access Pandemic Support Measure and the additional 10 individual COVID-19 Better Access item, please visit [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)

## Where else to get support

### Visit your GP

[www.healthdirect.gov.au/australian-health-services](http://www.healthdirect.gov.au/australian-health-services)

Your GP can refer you to the most appropriate mental health services within the Better Access Scheme.

### Digital Services

[www.headtohealth.gov.au](http://www.headtohealth.gov.au)

Digital health services can be used as an alternative to face-to-face therapies in times of need, or when and where convenient.

### Primary Health Networks

[www.health.gov.au/phn](http://www.health.gov.au/phn)

Primary Health Networks can help you find health services near you as they commission and coordinate services in based on local community need.

### headspace

[www.headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au)

headspace provides young people aged 12 to 25 years old with free or low cost services to young people, their families and friends.

## 24/7 telephone services offering counselling and support

### **Lifeline Australia**

13 11 14 [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)

Lifeline is a crisis support service that provides short-term support at any time for people who are having difficulty coping or staying safe.

### **Kids Helpline**

1800 551800 [www.kidshelpline.com.au/](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au/)

Kids Helpline is a free, private and confidential 24/7 phone and online counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25 years.

### **Beyond Blue**

1800 512 348 or at <https://coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au/>

Beyond Blue is available 24/7 by phone or online via chat or email to provide support on a range of mental health issues.

### **Suicide Call-Back Service**

1300 659 467 [www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au](http://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au)

For anyone considering suicide, living with someone who is considering suicide, or bereaved by suicide, the Suicide Call Back Service is available.

### **MensLine Australia**

1300 78 9978 [www.mensline.org.au/](http://www.mensline.org.au/)

MensLine Australia is a telephone and online counselling service for men.

### **Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling**

1800 011 046

[www.openarms.gov.au](http://www.openarms.gov.au)

Open Arms provides current armed forces personnel, veterans and their families with free and confidential counselling, group treatment programs, suicide prevention and community and peer network support for mental health and wellbeing.